National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council

Keeping NATURE a Part of Every Community's Future

Trees absorb airborne pollutants and greenhouse gases. Houston's urban forest—some 663 million trees—removes more than

60 thousand tons of air pollutants every year.

Wherever there are trees and forests—temperate or tropical, in cities and towns or outside their borders—we find the natural foundations of our communities, the green infrastructure which sustains their future. **We all benefit from the social and environmental services trees can provide.**

The Council fosters communication, collaboration, and innovation among the many organizations, agencies and individuals dedicated to conserving, and growing urban and community forests.

Growing for Livable Communities

Americans have always valued trees. Their presence can define our cities: Oak Park, Pine Bluff and Aspen, to name just three. Trees nourish our spirit of community—whether it's the Liberty Tree, the Constitution Oak or the wonderful red maple that shades your own town library.

Since 1991, the Council has advised the Secretary of Agriculture on ways to help communities plant more trees, care for them, and keep their streets and parks green. Our **Challenge Cost-Share Grant Program** funded ground-breaking research on the relationship between urban trees and children's health; the value of shade trees in conserving energy; how trees and green space improve urban economies. Administered through the Forest Service, this program seeded many of today's most vigorous community tree programs, and provided tools that helped launch new approaches to urban forestry.

TODAY, OUR DIRECTION IS CHANGING.

No longer can we measure success simply by the number of trees planted, or how often the local Tree Board might meet. **The challenge to urban forestry is to make communities livable:** to sustain the green infrastructure that energizes neighborhoods, lowers energy bills, reduces global warming, purifies water, or simply offers kids a safe, outdoor place to play.

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Green space

helps children learn, reduces incidence of childhood asthma, and encourages outdoor play that helps fight obesity.

> "The threats facing our forests don't recognize property boundaries.

So, in developing a shared vision around forests, we must also be willing to look across property boundaries. In other words, we must operate at a landscape-scale by taking an all-lands approach."

SECRETARY TOM VILSACK, USDA
Seattle, Washington | August 2009

More than **70 million acres** of urban forests provide ecosystem services in cities, suburbs and rural communities.

Many Needs, One Forest

Fly over any city in America. You'll see oases of green, scattered at first, but then stretching over the horizon and blending into the deeper woods and fields that cover the rural landscape. You can see the trees and forests, the rivers and lakes. But you can't see the boundaries that mark city and suburb from the open countryside, or the lines that define who owns the land, or who's responsible for its environmental health.

The fact is, there is no one owner, no one state or national agency, no single city or county that's responsible for making certain that forests and trees deliver the services our communities need. What happens far upstream, in the woods, is just as important to urban neighborhoods as the trees that shade their homes or line their streets. And what happens in the city can have profound consequences for downstream farms and the health and vitality of watersheds far from their borders.

What is the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council?

- The Council is the only Congressionally-chartered Federal advisory body for urban and community forestry, reporting directly to the Secretary of Agriculture.

- We are broadly representative of green community interests, and invested with the authority conferred by Secretarial appointment.

- We can help convene this community, identify key issues, and provide a credible platform for advancing common interests before the public and policymakers.

- By helping direct critical funding from the Forest Service, the Council fosters innovative approaches to urban and community forestry, and the application of these concepts to developing green communities.

Green Infrastructure & Urban Forestry

The Council recommends grants for program development, research, and collaboration to address strategic priorities identified by leaders in urban and community forestry.

For 2009-10, the Council will recommend projects that demonstrate how urban and community forestry can **improve community health**, **protect against climate change**, and **conserve energy**.

The Council will also select a significant grant to assess how current Federal, state and local programs work together in support of green infrastructure initiatives.

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Mature trees near homes save energy and money: up to 30% on summer cooling bills, and up to 25% on winter heating.

"Sometimes leadership is planting trees under whose shade you'll never sit."

GOV. JENNIFER GRANTHOLM
Governor of Michigan

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What's a City Park Really Worth?

Through a NUCFAC recommended grant, the Trust for Public Land convened a colloquium of park specialists and economists to assess the value of city parks to citizens and their communities.

Cities all over the country—from Seattle and Sacramento to Wilmington and Washington—have adapted this same framework to better understand the role parks play in their own communities. Says Philadelphia mayor Michael Nutter, "Our parks are an extraordinary regional and national treasure. This report makes the case for investing in them by documenting their value to the City, residents and visitors."

TPL's Center for Park Excellence quantified seven ways a city park system enriches a community:

- increased property value
- higher tourism and spending
- direct use for recreation
- improved health through outdoor activity
- community stability and cohesion
- cleaner water
- cleaner air, and reduced health problems

Nature at the Doorstep

For much of 20th century, urban trees were viewed as an amenity—something nice for the neighborhood. But beginning in 1992 with financial assistance from NUCFAC and the Forest Service, researchers Bill Sullivan and Frances (Ming) Kuo at the University of Illinois began to ask a different set of questions. **Could trees and green space really make a difference in people's lives—especially those living in poverty?**

After more than a dozen studies, their answer: an *unequivocal yes!*

In carefully-controlled field experiments, Drs. Sullivan and Kuo proved that access to ample green space in public housing reduced crime, graffiti, levels of domestic aggression, and gang activity; and at the same time promoted neighborliness and civility. And by analyzing ten years of achievement test scores from 500 Chicago public schools, Kuo confirmed that the greener the schoolyard, the higher students scored on achievement tests. Students simply learn better with nature at their doorstep.

"**Urban trees and forests aren't just a nice thing, they're a necessary thing.** They make our communities livable— better places for everyone to live, play, learn and work."

LAURENCE WISEMAN
Chair, NUCFAC

The National Urban and Community Forestry Program supports nearly **7,000** communities across the country.

2009 National Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Cost-Share Grants

Recipients were selected in a competitive process based on criteria developed by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council

City of New York, Department of Parks and Recreation

Research linkages between urban forest structure, community-scale air quality, and respiratory health.

King County, Washington

Develop and implement a model program to incentivize private landowners to maximize the climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits of their lands.

North Carolina State University

Research the potential for urban forests to promote physical activity and health.

The Davey Resource Group

Develop presentation and support materials to improve the knowledge and technical resources available to Homeowner Associations for managing and maintaining landscape trees, forest cover, and natural resources.

Oregon Department of Forestry

Develop and pilot the Tree Board University, an online training system to educate and inspire municipal tree board members.

University of Washington

Capture and communicate the full range of knowledge about health and well-being benefits provided by urban nature, and provide outreach and teaching tools for use across the U.S.

Friends of Hawaii's Urban Forest

Develop an Urban Forestry Emergency Operations Plan Template for Storm Response.

University of Vermont

Research, develop, implement and share best practices for creating citizen monitoring programs for multiple invasive species and tools to manage program data.

Society of Municipal Arborists

Develop best management practices for integrating urban forestry into environmental planning at the regional level.

University of Virginia

Using the Natural Resources Leadership Institute model, develop professional leadership networks in three states (CA, CO, TX) and disseminate these network models to other states.

Central Alabama Regional Planning and Regional Development Commission

Develop a disaster management protocol that will help communities identify urban forests co-located with or en route to critical infrastructure and recommend the management techniques that can limit personal injury and property damage.

Arbor Day Foundation

Involve new minority or under-represented urban forest stakeholders in the Partner's in Community Forestry National Conference and help them implement key conference findings back in their own community.

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National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council
www.fs.fed.us/ucf/nucfac

For access to the world of urban forestry
www.treelink.org

USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry
www.fs.fed.us/spf/

USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry
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